

Early religion recommended.

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S E R M O N

PREACHED in

St. *T H O M A S*'s;

For the

B E N E F I T

Of the

CHARITY-SCHOOL,

I N

Gravel - Lane, Southwark :

O N

NEW-YEARS-DAY,

MDCCLII.

By *©. HUGHES*, D.D.

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L O N D O N,

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T O

Mr. JOHN WORSLEY,
of Hertford.

Dear Sir!

THE following plain sermon was *preached* at the desire of a particular friend, whom I could not refuse; and is now *published*, according to annual custom, at the request of the gentlemen, who direct the affairs of the CHARITY-SCHOOL in *Gravel-lane*. I take the liberty, without your knowledge, to inscribe it to you.

THE *near relation*, in which divine Providence has united us, and the *kind manner* in which you have filled it up, intitle you to my constant regards and best wishes. The *business* of life, in which you have been long engaged, with credit to *yourself*, and advantage to *others*, is so correspondent to the subject of the ensuing *discourse*, that I thought an address of this nature would be very proper.

YOUR known *skill* in the learned languages; your easy and sweet *temper*; your watchful *attention* to every thing, that regards the welfare of the children committed to your care; the good *example* you set them in a

conduct, regular and instructive ; the *pains* you take to instil religious and virtuous principles into their tender minds, and to lead them into an early acquaintance with GOD their *Maker* ; not leaving these things to others, but conscientiously discharging them as your own proper duty ; are circumstances, which have secured to you the esteem of all, who know you. And, indeed, if your encouragement and success should be always equal to your abilities and application, you need desire no more !

I congratulate the success GOD *has* given you, in the education of many young gentlemen, who love and honour you, and have cause to bless GOD for so friendly a tutor in early life. Go on, Sir, and prosper ! GOD Almighty bless your *future* labours for the advantage of the rising generation ! And, whilst you are laying yourself out for the improvement of the children of *others*, may this be *part* of your reward ; that your own immediate offspring may be early enriched with divine grace ; and improve in every thing, that will render them growing comforts to you, and great blessings to the world. I am

Your affectionate brother

Aldermanbury,
Jan. 1. 1742.

and humble servant,

@. HUGHES.



ECCLES. xii. I.

*Remember now thy Creator in the
days of thy youth——*



IT is generally agreed, that *Solomon* king of *Israel* was the inspired penman of this excellent book: which is styled *Ecclesiastes*, because the author personates and assumes the character of a grave and judicious *preacher*. It is supposed, that this book was the last of all *Solomon's* composures; pen'd in his old age, and when he was perfectly recover'd from those vanities, which in former life he had with too much eagerness pursued. These things he reviews with just concern, and *here* gives us his serious and mature reflections upon them.

THE grand design of the *royal preacher*, in this admirable sermon, is to assure us from his own sad experience, that there is no true and solid happiness to be found in any enjoyments of sense: all earthly things, riches, honours and pleasures, are so far from furnishing

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nishing the rational soul with substantial felicity, that they are indeed *vanity and vexation of spirit*^a; not only *unsatisfying*, but also *troublesome and vexatious*.

HE hence infers, that it would be an argument of extreme folly to set our affections upon earthly things; or to seek a happiness from them.—But, that we may not be left in any doubt or uncertainty about true happiness, the preacher in the close of his sermon, tells us that there is such a thing to be found; and that it lies in the practice of religion; in the fear of God and a conscientious observance of his commands. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter*; this is the inference or corollary to be deduced from the whole discourse; all that has been said, may be sum'd up in this narrow compass; *fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man*: much of the strength and beauty of the *original* is lost in our *translation*; the word *duty* being improperly supply'd. With what vigour does the expression appear in *Solomon's* own words! *this is the whole of man*: his whole *duty* is comprized in this; his whole *interest* and *happiness* lies here; and his whole *care and business* shou'd be employ'd about it: *this is the whole, the all, of man*^b.

TOWARDS the end of the foregoing chapter *Solomon* addresses himself to *young persons*;

^a Eccles. i. 14.

^b Ibid. xii. 13.

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sons; and by a sharp *irony* he reproves their eager pursuit of sensual pleasures; a fault most incident to *that age*, which is generally violent, and impatient of restraint, fond of amusements, and prone to vanity. He hereupon gives them very serious and seasonable cautions; puts them in mind of a future day of accounts, when GOD will bring them into judgment for all these things. The structure of the sentence is very elegant, and emphatical; *rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the way of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; q. d.* "Give a loose to thy appetites; gratify thy sensual inclinations; take thy fill of pleasures; indulge thyself in every sensual delight, that an eager eye can discover, or a naughty heart can desire; follow, whithersoever corrupt nature leads; and stick at nothing that will afford thee any pleasing gratification." How much does the preacher delight his *young auditor* with this advice! this is the very course he is inclined to take; this is what he would with gladness do; this is *propheying smooth things*; these are *pleasing* words indeed! so young people are disposed to think: but *Solomon* did not intend to encourage any in such a way; and therefore, though he has express'd himself in this sort of language, yet it was only with a view to paint out in strong

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strong colours the common disposition of youth; and that, what he had to add, might come with the greater force upon conscience, and be more likely to excite to a different behaviour; *but know thou that for all these things GOD will bring thee into judgment*: q. d. “think of that great and terrible day of the Lord, when thou must stand before his bar, and give a strict account to him of thy whole conduct in this state of trial; and then give a loose to thy passions, if thou *canst*; then abandon thyself to a vicious course of life, if thou *darest*.”

N. THE believing expectation of a *future judgment* is a powerful check to the sensual pleasures and vain entertainments of the *present life*.

SOON after comes in the text, which *Solomon* seems to have added, as a remedy against a worldly temper: *Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth*. A serious regard to GOD in early life, will be a sovereign preservative from a thousand snares and vanities, to which young persons are too much inclined, and in great danger of being entangled with.

THE design of *Solomon*, in these words, is to recommend and press *early religion*. And this is *my* design, in the choice of them

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them for the subject of our present meditation. It is, I am sure, a theme of vast importance, and what should be frequently, and with great zeal inculcated : and, as it is peculiarly suitable to the beginning of a *new year* ; so neither is it in the least disagreeable to the particular design of our *present coming together*. I will endeavour to discourse upon it in such a manner, as may answer all good purposes.

IN the text are these two distinct parts.

1. AN important duty enjoined ; *Remember thy Creator.*
2. A particular season of life specified, in which this duty is peculiarly proper ; *in the days of thy youth.*

I SHALL suggest a few thoughts to your consideration under each of these heads ; and then improve the subject in, the best manner I can, by way of *application*.

- I. AN important duty is here enjoined ; *Remember thy Creator.*

IN order to have a just notion of *Solomon's* advice in these words, it will be proper to consider, both

WHO it is, we are called upon to remember ; and

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WHAT

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WHAT is included under this term *remember*.

As to the *first* inquiry, *whom* we are to remember; the text says, *thy creator*. It is worth notice, that it is not said, "remember God," or "remember the Lord." Young men, perhaps, being heated with lust, and eager in the pursuit of vanity, would not be controlled by such advice; but might be ready with furious disdain, to turn upon their monitor, in the insolent language of the proud king of *Egypt*; "*Who is the Lord that we should obey him?*" or, who "*is God that we should remember him?*" Now, to prevent such an unseemly fallacy as this, the royal preacher has used a term, which is expressive of God's *relation* to us; and at once puts us in mind of our great *obligations* to him, and suggests a strong reason, why we should remember him; *thy creator*.

[It is generally remarked by critics on this place, that the word is *plural* in the original, *thy creators* *; from whence they have infer'd a *trinity* of persons in the God-head. But this is going a step too far: tho' I firmly believe the doctrine itself, and think it sufficiently established by scripture; yet it must be owned, that the most we can gather from this particular place is a bare *plurality*

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ality of persons ; we must have recourse to other passages of revelation, to determine the number to be *three*, and neither more nor less. I the rather remark this, because not only the doctrine of the *trinity*, but other important doctrines of christianity have received prejudice, from the zeal of their advocates, in pressing into their service texts of scripture ; which either have no relation to them, or however will by no means warrant the conclusions that are drawn from them. In our defence of gospel-truths, we should always be cautious, not to *wrest* the scriptures ; or lay more stress upon them, than they will fairly bear. By the other method the cause will always suffer. But this by the bye.]

As to the *second* inquiry, what we are to understand by the term *remember* ? It will suffice to say, that this term, in *our language*, seems to be of a more contracted signification, than what the *original* requires. The word in the *Hebrew* * not only signifies to *recollect*, and *call to mind* what we have heard or known before ; but also to be *mindful of*, to *meditate*, to *consider*, to *bear in ones mind*, to *think upon*. This advice being given to young men, I do not see it necessary to suppose, that they must have a previous knowledge of God, before they can come to the practice of this duty.

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What a man does not *know*, he can't properly be said to *remember*. And, therefore, the *word* here must be understood to mean no more, than *acquaint thyself with GOD*; *think much* upon him; let him be *in all thy thoughts*; and *consider* him as *thy creator*.

PERHAPS the *full design* of this advice to youth, may be represented in the following particulars.

I. REMEMBER, and bear it in thy mind, that *thou hadst* a creator.

THIS is what many persons have need to be put in mind of. They live by chance and without design; as if they came into the world by chance, and had no business of consequence to transact. They cannot be so stupid, as to imagine they created themselves; and yet they *sacrifice* only to *their own nets*, and their own will is their only law. Pride and conceit have swell'd them into deities, and they cannot admit a superior, *who is Lord over us?* But *this their way is their folly!* Let us remember, that time was when we had not any being; and that we are indebted to some other for our being; we *had* a creator.

2. CON-

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2. CONSIDER and think, *who* was thy creator.

^d *WHAT* is his name, if thou canst tell? It is strongly suggested by *Elibu* in one of his speeches to *Job*, that how fit an employment soever it be for all the children of men to be inquiring after their Maker, yet this was the serious exercise of *very few*; so few, that we may say comparatively *none*; ^e *None saith, where is GOD my maker*: and it is to be feared, that a negligent disregard of the creator is not less general in our day. Strange and amazing stupidity this! — “ I “ find myself in being; how came I to “ exist? who gave me this being?” not *myself*; that is impossible: not *my parents*; for whatsoever they as instruments contributed towards my being, I have something in me which they could not give or convey. My reasonable and immortal spirit could not be the produce of my parents, nor of any other created being: unless, according to the scheme of a zealous writer of the last age, “ * immortality is only an accident, “ and to be confer’d by baptism, provided “ that baptism be administered by men “ *episcopally* ordained.” If this were the case, I confess it is as easy for an *English* priest

^d Prov. xxx. 4.

^e Job xxxv. 10.

* *Dodwell.*

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priest to make an *immortal soul*, as it is for a *Romish* priest to make a God.

IT must be some intelligent agent, superior to all created nature, that is able to produce such a being as I am. And who can this be but GOD, the great creator of all things? It is for his good ^f *pleasure* we are and were created. He is the ^s *former* of our bodies, and the *father* of our spirits. His infinite *wisdom* and almighty *power* produced such a creature into being; and his immense *goodness* prompted him to it. We owe our whole selves to GOD, as having received both soul and body from him. His *wisdom* formed the plan of our *bodies*; his *power* erected the wondrous building; and his own divine *image* was the model, according to which our *souls*, with all their useful faculties, were made. ^b *He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; 'tis the same almighty GOD, that giveth breath to the people, and spirit to them that walk therein.*

3. INQUIRE and think *what sort of a creature* GOD has made thee; and what he has done for thee in thy creation.

THIS

^f Rev. iv. 11. ^s If. xl. 2. and Heb. xii. 9. ^b If. xlii. 5.

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THIS is a necessary part of duty, and will answer valuable purposes to promote religion in heart and life. Ten thousand fatal mistakes are to be placed to the account of self-ignorance. Did men consider more carefully what sort of creatures they are; did they know themselves more thoroughly; we should soon see the world vastly amended.

LET me then inquire, "what am I?" "what kind of creature has GOD made me?" I find myself placed among an order of creatures at the top of the visible creation; I am made a partaker of the *human* nature. GOD has done great things for me. The two grand constituent parts of my nature are *body* and *soul*: by the *one* I am related to the earth; and by the *other* allied to the world of spirits, and can claim kindred with GOD himself.

IF I examine the structure of my *body*, I must express my grateful admiration in the devout language of the inspired Psalmist; *I will praise thee, O GOD, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; my substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.* The curious workmanship of our bodies is a proper subject of admiration: such a vast variety of members; every member

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member a *wonder* : all of them adjusted and disposed in the fittest manner to answer the purposes both of *use* and of *ornament*. To consider how *curiously* we are *wrought* ; or, as the *Hebrew* expresses it, * *imbroidered* ; exquisitely composed of bones and muscles, veins and arteries, sinews and other parts ; and all framed with the most amazing skill ; this may well excite admiration in us, as it has in *Heathens* themselves.

BUT if I proceed to examine the nature of my *soul*, so far as I can know it ; and seriously consider the powers and faculties thereof, my gratitude and surprize must be greatly heightened. When GOD had created the fabrick of the body, and finished the walls of clay, he introduced a noble guest to dwell in it, and *both together* make the *man*. My soul is a † *particle of divine breath* ; a reasonable, intelligent, immortal being ; made capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying GOD, in some measure *here*, more fully *hereafter* ; it derives its original from heaven, and thither it tends again.—May almighty grace prevent its miscarrying by the way !

4. RECOLLECT and think *for what purpose* GOD made thee. What was his end

* The *vulgar* renders it *acupictus* : we are a fine piece of needle-work, or curious imbroidery.

† *Divinae particulae aerae*.

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end and view in creating *such* a being?
What did GOD send thee into life for?

THIS is an inquiry of great consequence ; and we should seriously meditate upon the proper answer to it. In general it is this ; “ I was made, as all other creatures were, “ for GOD :” ^k *the Lord hath made all things for himself*. Not for his real advantage, for he is incapable of receiving benefit from any of his creatures : our *goodness extendeth not unto him* ; neither can the most exalted *angel profit the Almighty*. GOD’s essential felicity cannot be really affected by any created beings : the *holy angels* are not capable of adding to it ; the *devils* in hell cannot impair or take from it. Nevertheless he has made us *for himself*, i. e. for his own service and glory ; that he might give an illustrious discovery of his infinite goodness, wisdom, power, and his other most glorious perfections. I was made to love, serve, and glorify GOD, to speak forth his praises, and to make his name glorious, and to contribute my part towards promoting his honour in the world. For this purpose, GOD has given to *me* powers and faculties, far beyond what the inferior parts of the creation have : He ^l *teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven*. In consequence of this, we must con-

^k Prov. xvi. 4.

^l Job. xxxv. 11.

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clude, that God expects more from us than from them : an infinitely wise creator would never have given us higher capacities than the brutes, if he designed us for no higher purposes. Surely we may from the noble powers of our souls infer, that we do not live merely to live ; that we were born for something better than to eat and drink, to provide for our bodily subsistence ; and to keep in repair and uphold our earthly tabernacles, as long as we can. The *brutes* have natural instincts, which direct them to all this ; they are hereby taught to choose what things are most convenient to their natures, and to avoid what would be prejudicial or destructive. But *we* were created for *greater* ends ; for nothing less than *to glorify* God, and *to be happy* in him. We are made capable of knowing God, of being obedient to his *moral* government ; and we are designed, by proper methods in this state of *trial*, to be trained up in a preparation for the state of *perfect happiness*, which we are capable of enjoying for ever. Once more.

5. REMEMBER, and call to mind, *what returns* thou hast made to thy creator ; and how thou hast answer'd the ends of thy being.

LET every one of us this day review life, and consider to what purposes we have lived !

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lived! and, I am persuaded, the best amongst us will see reason to sigh out some doleful lamentation, like this: "Alas! how little careful have I been to act correspondently to the great designs my creator had in view, when he commanded me into being! how seldom has God been in my thoughts! how little have I done for him or my own soul! my highest interests have been least attended to; and my conduct has been very unworthy of those great things which God did for me in my creation!"

INDEED, a serious inquiry into our past behaviour, can scarce fail of being very serviceable to us, let the result be what it will. For

IF I find, I have in the main *remember'd my creator*, and endeavoured conscientiously to answer the end of my being: what cause shall I have for thankfulness? what foundation of comfort? what pleasure in looking back? and what rapturous joy in future prospects?

IF I find, I have *forgotten the Lord my maker*; too much neglected him, and the great concerns of my soul; and not duly attended to the noble ends of my creation; what a motive will this be to double diligence for the *future*? what proper humiliation will it excite in my soul for what is *past*? how earnest will it make me in prayers to God, that he would mercifully overlook

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former neglects and mistakes ; and that he would graciously give me help for time to come.—This is an excellent way of *beginning a new-year !*

THESE several heads, I think, represent the full extent of the royal preacher's meaning, in the advice he gives young men, to *remember their creator* ; and they involve the whole of practical godliness : for under one or other of them, are included all the duties we owe to *him who made us* ; and, by consequence, every thing which by the *law of creation*, or the *revealed will* of the creator, is become our duty as well to our *fellow-creatures*, and *ourselves*, as to his Majesty. So that the advice here given amounts to this : “ mind religion, cultivate “ holiness of heart and life ;” or, according to the language of the inspired apostle, ^m *Exercise thyself unto godliness* ; or as Solomon himself speaks more explicitly, ⁿ *fear GOD and keep his commandments.*

HAVING distinctly represented the nature and extent of the *duty* here enjoined ; we are now, according to the proposed scheme, to consider,

II. THE particular season of life here specified, as peculiarly proper for the discharge of this duty : *in the days of thy youth.*

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^m 1 Tim. iv. 7.

ⁿ Eccles. xii. 13.

THE *Greeks* divided human life into *seven* different stages; the *fifth* of which they termed *Neotns*, *youth*; and this they reckoned the space between *fourteen* years of age and *thirty*. But we need not be nice in determining the precise time of life here designed: indeed, I imagine, that *Solomon* intends no more than *early life*; that this important work should be undertaken *soon*, and not be put off to an uncertain *hereafter*. When the understanding is dawning, and youth are capable of receiving knowledge, and of using their reasonable powers, tho' in a feeble degree; they should *begin* here, *remember their creator*; this should be the *first* business of life; attended to not only *above*, but also *before* any other concerns, how momentous soever.

THIS advice is peculiarly suitable to *youth*. For young men are most addicted to vanity and folly; their passions and affections are vigorous and strong; they generally expect great things from the world, promise themselves a great deal of pleasure in the amusements and entertainments of it; and so they fondly make their court to it; giving themselves up to the influence of worldly *principles* and *examples*. And if they have the advantage of dear parents, faithful ministers, and kind friends, to advise, warn and admonish them otherwise; the

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the self-conceit of young men often times make them neglect, and it may be, despise their monitors; there is a certain impetuosity, a head-strong obstinacy in *many*, (God forbid it should be thus with *all*) that hardens them against the counsels of their friends; when, at the same time, it softens and makes them yielding like *wax*, to every alluring temptation, and hurries them on with a furious zeal into the ways of sin*; to the neglect of GOD, and to their own certain prejudice in *this* world, and the *next*.

FOR this *reason*, the royal preacher particularly specifies *the days of youth*. — Not, that others are exempted from this work: no, Sirs; it is the indispensable duty of *all* men in every stage of life, to *remember their creator*, and to make religion their constant care and practice. The *old* are not left to themselves; 'tis their duty to maintain, and cultivate a most reverential regard to God their maker; and then only is their *hoary head a crown of glory*, when *it is found in the way of righteousness*°. True piety adds a glory to old-age; and when it is so adorned, it is a *good old-age*; worth desiring, as truly valuable *in itself*, and commanding a respectful reverence from *all others*. If men who are already got forward, or far advanced in life, have not minded religion before; they

* Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.

Hor. de Art. Poet.

• Prov. xvi. 31.

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they must *begin* now : if they have ; they must still *pursue* it.

THE meaning therefore of *Solomon's* advice in the text is ; “ that we should *begin* times, and in early life, *begin* to serve the Lord ; we should in *our youth* remember *our creator* ; at first setting out in life ; so soon as we come to the regular use of reason, we shou'd employ it in meditating upon GOD, in cultivating a knowledge and acquaintance with him : we cannot begin this work too soon. The first part of life, our youthful days should be thus engaged.” In the *Hebrew* it is, *in the days of thy choice* * : i. e. either, in thy *choice days* ; our best days should be devoted to GOD and religion, when we are capable of most active service : or, in the days of *thy choosing* ; youth is the time, in which persons settle to one or other kind of business ; they *then* generally choose the manner of life and occupation, which they intend to pursue. Now, says *Solomon* to the young man ; “ when thou art thus choosing, don't forget *thy creator*, be sure to *remember* him ; ask his advice, yield thyself to his direction and conduct, implore the favour of his providence ; and at first setting out secure his friendship, by paying him those
“ regards,

* בחרותך, *tuarum electionum*. Per metalepsin בחרור juvenis, q. ad militiam & negotia electus & idoneus, & ad omnes operas selectus. *Buxt. Ep. Fam.*

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“ regards, which his *relation to thee* and
“ thy *obligations to him* necessarily require at
“ thine hands: they are all sum’d up in
“ one comprehensive term, *remember thy*
“ *creator.*”

I WOULD here mention some of those arguments which inforce this duty; and demonstrate it to be a most fit and reasonable thing on all accounts, to enter upon the practice of strict religion in early life, and to remember our creator *in the days of youth*. And I wish to GOD, that some thoughts may be suggested, that may fasten upon the minds of young persons, and prevail with them to consecrate the prime of life to the service of their Maker!

1. WE are obliged to this. in point of *duty*.

IT is not a matter of indifference, nor are we left at liberty to do it, or not to do it: but GOD strictly commands our early regards; he made us for *himself*. When we come first to the use of our reasonable powers, and are capable of considering what sort of creatures GOD hath made us, *duty* obliges us to imploy those powers in the service and to the glory of our great creator. We should immediately be casting about in our minds, how we may best answer the end of our creation. *Lord, what wilt thou have*

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have me to do? It is a plain dictate of the law of nature, that creatures should pay homage to their creator; and should discharge all those duties, which such a *relation* infers.

2. IN point of *gratitude* we are obliged to this.

IF *one part* of life is really better than another, surely gratitude requires us to devote *that* to the service of the great creator, to whom we owe *all*. The time of *youth*, the earliest part of life, is upon many accounts the *best*; when we are in strength and vigour, both of *body*, and of *mind*; when all the powers of our souls are in a lively frame, capable of full exercise; not yet infeeblled by long and constant use; nor impaired by the infirmities of a disordered, decaying body, which, according to the laws of union, it is easily affected with.

HE, who deserves our *all*, should certainly have our *best*: and if we are for putting him off with our *worst*, and what indeed is scarce good for any thing; we sufficiently discover, that we are insensible of our obligations; nor shall we ever be able to clear ourselves from the charge of vile ingratitude.

THIS is one of the arguments our sacred author uses to press his advice on young persons; for thus he adds, immediately af-

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ter the text, *while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*; i. e. advanced years, when men are growing old: and then in an elegant train of metaphors, *he* beautifully represents the infirmities of old age, and shows how unfit a season it is for active service in the business of religion; and consequently, how monstrously absurd and ungrateful to GOD it must be, to adjourn our regards to him, till such a time of life, when we are wearing out apace, and in a manner are fit for nothing.

READ Solomon's description of the infirmities of old-age^p; recollect what observations yourselves have made of this nature, in the case of others; and then tell me, whether you judge it likely, that you shall remember your creator *to any good purpose*, if you are to begin the work at that time of life. Or, let me ask; is this a *grateful* return to thy creator? is this thy *kindness* to thy heavenly friend, from whom is derived all thou *art* and all thou *hast*, to put him off with the dregs of life? when we have scarce more than an *animal* life, all the faculties of our souls being feeble and dull, all the members of our bodies stiff and weak; is this a time to *begin* with GOD, and to *enter* upon the practice of religion? The service of GOD, and the concerns of our
souls

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souls deserve and require out utmost might and strength ; and is it fit to defer these to our decrepit years, when *strength* and *heart* are both *failing* ? “ when the tackling is “ spoilt, and the ship rotten,” (as a learned writer says *) “ is that a time to put “ to sea, or rather, when the ship is new “ built ? shall the devil feast upon the flow- “ er, and freshness of your youth, and God “ only have the scraps and fragments of “ the devil’s table ? ”

3. WE are obliged to this in point of *prudence.*

To remember our creator in the days of *youth*, is the wisest step we can possibly take ; not only as we shall then do it *to better purpose*, than in more advanced years ; which has been hinted *already* : nor merely, as hereby we shall promote our own *advantage* ; of which I shall speak *hereafter* : but *prudence* strictly obliges us to it, upon another weighty consideration, which may fitly be mentioned *now*, *viz.* That the days of youth may possibly be the *only* time we shall have for this work ; it is therefore the highest madness to postpone the business of religion, till an uncertain future time.

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* Dr. *Manton*, on Ps. cxix.

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A SERIOUS regard to GOD and religion is, of all others, the most important concern of human life; 'tis *the one thing needful*; of absolute necessity to be done in some part of life, or we are undone for ever. Will not *prudence*, then, command us not to defer this important work? are not delays dangerous, and may they not be fatal? thou ownest a conviction, that the creator ought to be remembered; and why not now? hast thou any affair of equal consequence? is it not madness to run a hazard here? is it too soon to enter upon religion? or canst thou with safety adjourn the grand and weighty affair? how knowest thou, oh young man, whether thy creator, whom thou dost shamefully neglect, will allow thee any future time? remember as he made thee at first, so he can unmake thee again, whenever he pleases; thy *times* are in his *hands*; to be lengthened out, or cut short, as he shall think fit: and may'st thou not reasonably expect, that he will *take thee away in the midst of thy days*, in the earlier part of life, as a just punishment for thine ungrateful, and affronting treatment of him? life is very precarious; the thread is fine, and soon snapt. Thou art young and vigorous at present; *thy mountain* seems to *stand* strong; but dost thou hereupon presume? oh foolish and unwise! thou knowest not how soon the vital knot,
which

Early religion recommended. 25

which binds soul and body together, may be broken, and *the dust return to the earth as it was*; and *the spirit unto God who gave it*; another of Solomon's arguments to inforce his advice to youth. ¹ God can soon *change thy countenance, and send thee away*. Youth and vigour are no security against the arrest of death. The *Jews* have a proverb, that in *Golgotha* are skulls of all fizes: the young and the old, the weak and the strong, meet together in the silent grave. Many more die young, than live to old age. What a sweep has death made of the *healthy*; the *young*, the *vigorous* and *strong* last year! * how many of our own acquaintance, friends or relations have in that compass of time been summoned into eternity! and how knowest thou, oh young man, who art for deferring the remembrance of thy creator till future time; how knowest thou, I say, but that *this year thou shalt die*. Now therefore is *thy* time; it may be, *all* thy time; *now*, or, for what thou knowest, *never*. Life may be cut short at once, and thou mayst be snatched away, without having an opportunity of hearing God's call any more. ¹ *Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation!* IN

¹ Inf. v. 7.

* The yearly bill reckons between the age of *twenty* and *fifty*, (which is the most vigorous part of life) no less than 10,023.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

26 Early religion *recommended.*

IN a word ; we *cannot begin* a work of this importance *too soon* ; we *may defer* it *too long* ; and then are we miserable, past recovery. Wisdom and prudence therefore, most loudly call upon us to mind religion *early* ; and not by wicked delays to hazard our souls, and put our eternal happiness upon the greatest uncertainty.

4. IN point of *interest* we are also obliged to this.

IF you are real friends to yourselves, you will *remember your creator in the days of your youth*. This is the surest way of promoting your own interest. And this is an argument, which I hope you'll feel the weight of, and readily yield to ! Every one who neglects GOD, *wrongeth his own soul* ; cuts himself off from that happiness, which he might otherwise enjoy ; but those ^c *who seek GOD early, shall find him*. A most gracious promise this ! sufficient to excite the earliest regards to our creator ! To *find GOD*, is a phrase including all happiness. “ If GOD is mine, what need “ I more ? I have all I hope, and all I wish.” Who would not devote his early life to the service of his creator, when he has such an encouraging promise to build upon ?

WE

^c Prov. viii. 17.

Early religion *recommended.* 27

WE shall hereby lay in *early* for the favour of GOD. If we *betimes* yield ourselves to him, he will *readily* become ours; and how rich an advantage will hereby accrue to us, we cannot fully tell. GOD not only *expects* our early regards to him; but he is extremely *pleased* with them; and will most graciously *reward* them.

NOTHING more *acceptable* to the great creator, than to see *young* persons inquiring after him, dedicating their tender years to his service, and entering upon a strict profession and practice of religion in the first beginning of life. He takes a kind notice of such; 'Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy YOUTH, the love of thine espousals. Under the law, you know, the *first-fruits* and the *first-born* were devoted to GOD, as his peculiar property; so should the *first* of our time. Perhaps, the great satisfaction our blessed Saviour discovered in having little children brought to him, might be designed to represent how acceptable to him *early* piety is. Of all the disciples St. John was the *youngest*, and, as it should seem, the *most beloved*: he is spoken of under this sweet and emphatical periphrasis, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.

BE-

¹ Jer. ii. 2.

² John xix 26, and xxi. 20.

28 Early religion recommended.

BESIDES; *remembering our creator in the days of youth is decorous, it has a good aspect, and looks well.* It is a sign we have a just honour and regard for GOD, when we give him our *first* and our *best*. The incomparable archbishop Tillotson has a very affecting paragraph on this subject; the thoughts are quite natural, but expressed in a masterly manner, almost peculiar to himself; I'll borrow his own words, that none of the beauty may be lost. “ As there is joy in
“ heaven at the conversion of a great and
“ old sinner; so it cannot but be a very de-
“ lightful spectacle to GOD, and angels, and
“ the spirits of just men made perfect, to
“ see a *young* person, besieged by powerful
“ temptations on either side, to acquit him-
“ self gloriously, and resolutely to hold out a-
“ gainst the most violent assaults: to behold
“ one in the prime and flower of his age,
“ that is courted by pleasures and honours, by
“ the devil, and all the bewitching vanities
“ of this world, to reject all these, and to
“ cleave stedfastly to GOD: nay, to frown
“ upon all these temptations, and to look
“ down upon them with indignity and scorn;
“ and to say, let those dote on these things,
“ who know no better; let them adore sen-
“ sual pleasures and lying vanities, who are
“ ignorant of the sincere and solid pleasures
“ of religion and virtue; let them run into
“ the arms of temptations, who can forget
“ God

Early religion *recommended.* 29

“ GOD their *creator*, their *preserver*, and *the*
“ *guide of their youth* : as for me, I will serve
“ the Lord, and will employ my whole time,
“ either innocently or usefully, in serving
“ GOD, and in doing good to men, who are
“ made after the image of GOD : this work
“ shall take up my whole life, there shall be
“ no void nor empty space in it ; I will en-
“ deavour, as much as possibly I can, that
“ there may be no gap or breach in it for the
“ devil and his temptations to enter : Lord,
“ I will be thine, I have chosen thee for my
“ happiness and *my portion for ever* : whom
“ have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none
“ upon earth, that I desire besides thee. Lo,
“ they that are far from thee shall perish ;
“ but it is good for me to draw near to GOD,
“ to begin and end my days in his fear and
“ to his glory *.”

AND, as *early religion* is thus peculiarly acceptable to GOD ; so it is what he will graciously reward, with a rich supply of blessings, *perhaps* in *this* world, most certainly in the *next*. He will not ^u forget your labour of love ; it ^w shall not be in vain in the Lord.

I WOULD here particularly mention some few advantages, which an *early* regard to God and religion will secure to us ; and which we shall find will be of great service

* Vol. I. p. 520.

^u Heb. vi. 10.

^w 1 Cor. xv. 58.

30 Early religion *recommended.*

to us in life. They carry their own evidence along with them; and are such considerations, as well deserve to be the subject of meditation in your most serious and retired hours.

- I. THIS is really the best method you can take, to engage the presence of GOD with you in all after-parts of life; and to secure the blessing and conduct of divine Providence in all your affairs.

LET us set out with GOD, and he will never withdraw from us, unless we first forsake him. The providence of GOD superintends all human concerns; and we must depend upon his favour, for the success of our affairs, and for all the comforts of life. And if we early *remember* him, and * *commit* ourselves to him in well-doing, as to a faithful creator; we may be assured that he will *direct* our steps, and order all things for our best advantage. If we † *seek* first the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us. So Christ tells his disciples; and so every good christian shall, undoubtedly find: *all these things*, all the good things of the present life, *shall be added unto you*, i. e. as far as they will be good for you, and will promote your real interest. But we must leave GOD, in his infinite wisdom,

* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

† Mat. vi. 33.

Early religion recommended. 31

dom, to judge for us in the case; and he knows what is good for us, better than we do ourselves. Were we left to be our own carvers, we should soon become *self-tormentors*, or *self-destroyers*.

2. EARLY regards to GOD and religion, will help to fortify you against all the temptations and snares, the difficulties and opposition, you may be afterwards exposed to, in the christian life.

THE world, in which we now sojourn, is a desert wilderness; beasts of prey roam about it; thorns and briars grow thick; ten thousand intricacies and perplexities; by-ways without number, and enemies both powerful and cunning. This our present condition! nor can we ever expect to get safe to our heavenly home, unless we are supported by a strength superior to our own, and are under the conduct of divine grace. But this we shall not fail of, if we in *early* life, yield ourselves to GOD, and enter upon the practice of religion. The ² *grace* of Christ shall be sufficient for us, and his *strength* be made perfect in our *weakness*. GOD will be with us all the way we go, and ^a *will guide us with his counsel*, till at length *he receives us to glory*.

E 2

MORE-

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^a Psal. lxxiii. 24.

32 Early religion recommended.

MOREOVER ; next to the assistance of divine grace, there is nothing will enable us so effectually to battle the tempter, as a sense of our having *early* entered upon the practice of strict godliness. This will inspire us with the heroic courage of *Joseph*, who hereby repel'd a very powerful temptation ; *how can I do this wickedness and sin against GOD^b ?* how can *I*, a child of the covenant, in my tender years devoted to GOD by my pious father ; *I*, who in early life professed religion, and have been taught to *fear GOD from my youth* ; *I*, who call myself by the name of the GOD of *Jacob* my father ; and declare myself his devoted servant, under the strongest ties of duty and gratitude ; *how can I do this wickedness and sin against GOD ?* this was the argument, which made his holy soul reject with scorn and disdain the proposal of his master's wife, when she would have corrupted his virtue.

AND thus, in the progress of life, may we be able to elude the most artful solicitations to sin, by the consideration of our having *early* devoted ourselves to the service of our creator. “ Am I tempted to this, “ or the other sin ? — *How can I do this “ wickedness, and sin against GOD ?* get “ thee behind me, Satan ; what meanest “ thou to make this attack upon my vir-
“ tue

Early religion *recommended.* 33

“ true and religion? I have been *long* dedi-
“ cated to my creator GOD; I entered up-
“ on religion in my *early youth*; I know
“ whom I have believed; I know I serve
“ a good master; he has always approved
“ himself such to me. ’Twould be base
“ ingratitude to deal treacherously with
“ him: I have not *found iniquity* in him,
“ nor has he given me the least cause to be
“ *weary of* him. It is no way consistent
“ with my avowed character, and my pro-
“ fessed relation to GOD, to comply with
“ any temptation to that which is sinful.
“ By long and early experience I know
“ what the ways of GOD are; and by the
“ assistance of divine grace, my most cun-
“ ning and powerful enemies shall never
“ seduce me out of them, or prevail upon
“ me deliberately to do any thing incon-
“ sistent with my *duty*, or unsuitable to my
“ *obligations* to my creator.”

3. THE sooner we enter upon religion,
we are more likely to adhere closely to
it; and the greater progress shall we
make in it.

THE practice of religion begun in early
life, will every day become more familiar
and easy. We shall gradually grow into a
habit of being good, and with great plea-
sure shall proceed in wisdom’s ways. Young
minds

34 Early religion *recommended.*

minds are most susceptible of impressions. And, whether *good* or *bad* principles are imbibed in the beginning of life, they usually stick *close* and last *long*; and the after-part of life is most usually of a piece.

IF a course of sin is *early* enter'd upon; it seldom happens, but the poor creature is hurried on from one vice to another with eager desire, till he becomes hardened in sin, and a monster in iniquity. Some there are, indeed, whom divine grace arrests in their full career, and prevents the dreadful ruin they were bringing upon themselves; they are *as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning*^c. Oh that instances of this might be more frequent! may many be recovered out of the snares of the devil, to the triumph of rich grace!

IN like manner, when young men become religious, and betimes remember their creator; the habits of virtue grow up with them; their graces improve; serious thoughts imploy their minds; religion becomes their delight; the practice of duty is grateful; they make a considerable proficiency in the school of Christ; and they are growing up towards perfection. They go from duty to duty, from grace to grace, and so are ripening for glory. They have the pleasure to find themselves every day drawing nearer home, and of seeing their com-

^c Amos iv. 11.

Early religion recommended. 35

complete happiness coming on apace. Their path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day^d. There are indeed, some unhappy instances of apostacy and degeneracy, where the growth of religion is stopt; and no good fruit springs up from the good seed, that was early sown, as might have been expected. The principles of religion, *betimes* instilled into them, are borne down, or worn out by the power of indwelling lusts, excited into action by the bad examples of a wicked and licentious world. GOD grant that such instances of back-sliding may seldom be known! but may early principles of piety and virtue, where-ever implanted, be cultivated and cherished by divine grace, and become productive of the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of GOD, and the advantage of the world. May those, who in youth, set out well, continue *so to run, that they may obtain*^e; and *having begun in the spirit*, may not end *in the flesh*^f!

BUT tho' there may be some exceptions, on both sides of the case; yet the general rule will still hold good, *viz.* that those, who in the first part of life mind religion, are most likely to adhere to it, and to make a greater progress in it afterwards. Upon this principle, no doubt, the remark of Solomon is grounded, *train up a child in the way he should*

^d Prov. iv. 18. ^e 1 Cor. ix. 24. ^f Gal. iii. 3.

36 Early religion recommended.

should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it^s. Not that this is *always*, and *universally* the case; (I wish to GOD it was!) but only *generally*, or what may with great reason be *ordinarily* expected. The observation of most judicious men hath confirmed the remark, that impressions made *betimes* continue long; like a new vessel, retaining for a great while the smell and taste of whatever it was first seasoned with; 'tis the *Roman* poets similitude*.

4. THIS is laying a sure foundation for comfort in after-life.

OH how pleasing a reflection will *early* religion afford afterwards! there is nothing will furnish to the serious christian such comfort, as this; especially at those seasons, when he stands in most need of comfort; and when pleasing reflections are most desirable! namely,

(1.) IN the advance of life, and when the infirmities of old-age are coming on.
 “ A well spent youth (says one) is the best solace of old-age.” † How joyous at such a season will it be to reflect, “ by the favour
 “ of

* Prov. xxii. 6.

* Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem
 Testa diu. Hor. *Epist.* 2. l. 1.

† Optimum senectutis solatium bene transacta juven-
 tus. Gejer. apud *Poli Syn.* ad loc.

Early religion recommended. 37

" of GOD I had the advantage of a reli-
 " gious education, under the instruction of
 " tender parents; or of other pious friends,
 " on whose care Providence early cast me.
 " By divine blessing upon their kind admo-
 " nitions, I was *betimes* brought into ac-
 " quaintance with GOD and the things of
 " GOD; and through his grace, I was in-
 " clined in *the prime of life* to set out in wis-
 " dom's ways; I began the profession of re-
 " ligion *betimes*, and devoted myself to the
 " service of my *creator* in my *youthful* days.
 " Blessed be GOD, who so soon disposed
 " my mind to the love and practice of re-
 " ligion! I can now look back upon that
 " scene with exquisite pleasure: the step I
 " then took, was, I am convinced, the
 " best and wisest I could have taken: 'twas
 " perfectly right. I began early with GOD,
 " and verily his goodness has attended me
 " ever since. Divine Providence has been
 " my constant guide and guard: nor have
 " I reason to doubt of the continuance of
 " GOD's mercy towards me, to the very
 " close of life. He, who has been *the*
 " *guide of my youth*; the stay and guard
 " of my riper years; surely will *not cast*
 " *me off in the time of old-age*^h: no; *this*
 " GOD is my GOD for ever and ever;
 " *he will be my guide unto death*ⁱ."

F

2. THIS

^h Ps. lxxi. 9.

ⁱ Ps. xlviii. 14.

38 Early religion *recommended.*

2. THIS will be a sovereign cordial under the afflictions of life. How much will the edge of our cutting sorrows be blunted by this thought : “ my afflictions come “ from *that* GOD, to whom I *early* devoted myself, and whom from the first “ of life I have sincerely served ; and therefore, how sharp soever the present visitation may be ; yet I make no question, but “ my heavenly father sees it necessary : and “ I will chearfully submit.” How much will this lighten our burdens, and lessen our forest trials. In a day of distress, such a person has a plea, form’d ready to his hand, which he may urge with great advantage ; *I am thine, Lord save me*^k. My almighty creator, whom I remember’d in my youth, will now remember me ; and as he knows my frame, he will not lay more upon me, than he will enable me to bear.

3. THIS will afford divine comfort in the concluding scene of life ; when comfort will be indeed most valuable. We are naturally afraid of death ; and, no doubt, it is an awful thing to die ; but with what sweet consolation, and holy confidence may the good man, who has *feared* GOD *from his youth*, launch into eternity ? for with full assurance of being regarded, he can address his creator ; “ I am thine, Lord *receive* me,
“ *into*

^k Psal. cxix. 94.

Early religion recommended. 39

“ *into thine hands I commit my spirit* ¹ ” : or in the resigning language of our dear Redeemer ; whose manner every christian, both in life and death, desires to imitate : “ ^m *Father, into thine hands I commend my spirit.* ”

I CLOSE this part of my discourse with an earnest wish, in which I hope you will all unite ; “ May religion be our *early*, our *constant* care through life ! and may we experience the comforts of it both *living* and *dying*, as well as reap the glorious rewards of it in an eternal state of perfect bliss *after death* ! ”

ALL that now remains is the

A P P L I C A T I O N.

IT will not be necessary to say much here, because the whole discourse has, in a manner, been an address to conscience ; and every thought has been directed to practice. Let me, however, suggest two or three things.

1. I WOULD, in the most solemn manner, resume the exhortation in the text, and urge it upon the *younger* part of my audience : *Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth.*

F 2

I HAVE

¹ Ps. xxxi. 5.

^m Luke xxiii. 46.

40 Early religion *recommended.*

I HAVE been earnestly pressing (oh would to God I might persuade) you *now* in the beginning of life, when you are come to the exercise of reason, to *enter* upon the practice of religion, and *betimes* to seek God.

It is, my young friends, an affair of the highest importance : oh let it not be put off any longer ! you run a vast hazard by delays !—You are *now* called, but God may possibly call *no more*—you are yet *within* the reach of mercy ; a short uncertain time may set you *beyond* it.—The *longer* you defer it, the *less inclin'd* will you be hereafter. As you get forward in life, excuses will gather strength ; the cares of the world will increase ; you will be in danger of contracting an ill habit ; growing indolent and unconcerned about religion ; and possibly, at length, you may entirely lay aside all thoughts of this most important work.

2. LET not *old* persons, or such as are got beyond *the days of youth*, think themselves unconcerned in a subject of this nature.

THE advice of *Solomon* is, indeed, directed to young persons, to *remember* God *betimes* : but sure it comes with double force
to

Early religion recommended. 41

to those who are far advanced in life ; especially such as have hitherto neglected God and their souls. Is God to be remember'd in the days of youth ? should the first and *best* part of life be devoted to religion ? and will those, who are growing in years, or arrived at old age, and are conscious of having neglected this duty, continue still to neglect it ? sure it is high time *to awake out of sleep*, to cast off carnal security, and to inquire *where is GOD my maker ?*

FOR GOD'S sake, for *your own* sake, set about this work immediately. Perhaps you will be ready to say (and I don't wonder at your apprehensive fears) " I doubt God will " not *now* accept *me*, who have disregarded " him *so long*." The devil too will encourage these fears all he can, that so he may divert thee from attending in good earnest to religion.—But, for thine encouragement, let me say ; if under a serious conviction of past neglects, thou appliest to God thro' Christ for mercy, and art sincerely determined upon a religious life, thine heart being fully fix'd for God ; thou mayst be assured, according to the constitution of the Gospel, that thou shalt find mercy : God, for Christ's sake, will *freely* pardon past neglects, and receive thee *graciously*, tho' thou comest *late*. The case of *old sinners* is melancholy and sad, but not hopeless and desperate. Tho' they

42 Early religion *recommended.*

they have delay'd coming till the *eleventh* hour; till they are got almost to the end of life; yet, if GOD, who knows the heart, finds them sincere, he will *in no wise cast them out.* While life is continued, and GOD is calling, there is hope. It had, indeed, been *well*, if in early life, they had minded GOD and their souls; however, *better late than never.*

LET me add, by way of terror, to alarm you, and further to press upon you the *remembrance of your creator*; that if you still delay this important work, and *designedly* put it off, till you come to lie on a sick and dying bed; as thinking it will be an easy matter to obtain mercy: I know no encouragement given you by the Gospel. This, I fear, is the unhappy case of multitudes; who deceived by vain hopes, disregard GOD, neglect the practice of religion, and persist in a sinful course, till life is just concluding; and then, with eager zeal, they cry aloud, "*Lord have mercy upon me! Christ have mercy upon me!*" The case of the penitent thief on the cross is widely different from theirs; and gives them no ground for hope. Their *designed, voluntary, and obstinate* delay, tho' often put in mind of their duty, and called upon to practise it, cuts them off from all reasonable hopes of mercy. I would not, indeed, limit the mercy and grace of GOD,
whose

Early religion recommended. 43

whose perfections are all infinite: but I see no warrant the scripture gives, to offer comfort in this sad case; the hopes of *such* are groundless, and they have too much reason to fear, that ^a *he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.*

3. LET parents hence learn their duty.

Is the creator to be remember'd in the days of youth; how careful then should parents be to instruct their children *early* in the things of GOD? they ought to begin betimes to lead them into a knowledge of their maker; that they may be sensible both of their obligations *to him*, and of the dutiful regards *he expects from them*. To a neglect of this, I fear, the degeneracy of the rising generation, the growth of infidelity, and the exorbitant increase of sensuality and licentiousness, are *principally* to be ascribed. My soul trembles to think, what a dreadful meeting such careless, *cruel* parents will have with their *wicked* children, at the bar of GOD at last. With what eternal curses will their unhappy offspring load them? and what severe revenge will they take upon themselves in the stinging reflections of their own awaken'd consciences?

^a Isa. xxvii. 11.

44 Early religion *recommended*.

ences ? Oh that family-religion, and parental instruction might be revived in our day !

LET me in the most solemn manner *adjure* all parents, that without delay they apply themselves to the conscientious practice of this *most important* duty. Begin *betimes* to teach your children to remember their creator ; instruct them *early* in the principles and duties of the christian religion ; and lead them, if you can, into the love and practice of virtue and piety, *while* their minds are tender, and *before* bad impressions have been made upon them.—Do this for GOD's sake. He expects that the children, which he has *graciously* given you, should be educated for him ; you must *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* °.—Do this for *your own* sakes. It will afford pleasure upon reflection ; and tend to make your children greater comforts to you. The *untoward, disobedient, and perverse* carriage of many children to their parents, when they are grown up in life, by which they become *heart-breaking sorrows*, is, I fear, very much owing to a want of good instruction in the *beginning* of their days : and where this is the case, it will vastly aggravate the affliction ; inasmuch, as parents must then consider it, as a punishment of their own criminal neglect.

° Ephes. vi. 4.

Early religion recommended. 45

glect. — Do this for *your children's* sake. God and nature bid them expect this from you ; and if you deny them these just demands, and take no care early to teach them to *remember* and fear their *creator* ; you discover yourselves to be guilty of the most unnatural *barbarity*, and in vain are all your pretences to *love* them. *Solomon* mentions the instructions he received in youth from his good parents, as an evidence of their sincere affection to him: *I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother ; he taught me also, &c.* ^p — Do this for the sake of your *families*. If children are early instructed in the ways of God ; this will have a happy influence upon the peace and good order of the whole house, and may be of great advantage to the inferior branches of the family. — Do this for the sake of Christ's *church*, and *interest* in the world. When young persons have their tender minds tinctured with a serious sense of religion ; they will be greater ornaments to their profession, and make more useful members of christian societies. Your families should be nurseries for the church.—Once more ; do this for your *country's* sake. You may this way merit the glorious title of true *patriots*. If your children in *early* life imbibe religious principles, they will in *growing*

G ing

^p Prov. iv. 3, 4.

46 Early religion *recommended.*

ing years be better subjects, and of greater service to the community. We might also hope, that by this means, a *thorough reformation* would soon be brought about ; and a more worthy conduct be display'd by all ranks of people. In which case we might with greater reason expect favour and mercy from God, in our present intricacies and difficulties : otherwise, we have room to fear that God will forsake us ; and *woe* be to us, *if God depart from us* !

[I WOULD now accommodate this subject to the *particular* occasion of our meeting together *this day*, and would infer from what has been said ;

4. IF a religious regard to the creator should be the employment of our early years ; how fit and worthy a charity is it, to contribute towards the instruction of such young children, who are in so low a condition of life, as in a manner cuts them off from an opportunity of gaining this divine knowledge !

How many parents, for want of having had the advantage of a good education themselves, are not capable of instructing their children ? they are *babes in knowledge* themselves ;

Early religion *recommended.* 47

selves; and *have need that one teach them, which be the first principles of the oracles of God*^r. How many also, by poverty and distress, are disabled from procuring the assistance of others, to instruct their children; or having little or no sense of the importance of this, to the future happiness of their children, do not care to be at the least charge about it: nor indeed, without much difficulty can they afford it!

UPON these accounts, how *wise*, how *fit*, how *kind* a thing is the institution of *Charity-schools*! provision is here made for the instruction of children, who otherwise might be *destroyed for lack of knowledge*; and will be *cumberers of the ground*; a burden or a plague to the society; being unfit for the service either of God or man; if not disposed to every thing that is wicked.

ALLOW me then to call upon you this day, readily and chearfully to contribute to such a *good* work. A work, by which you will bring *honour to God*; real *advantage* to your *country*; and may promote the present *comfort* and future *happiness* of many of your *fellow-creatures*.—You'll give me leave particularly to represent the case of the *Charity-school*, for which I am now asking your favour: *viz.*

^r Heb. v. 12.

T H E

State of the CHARITY-SCHOOL
in Gravel-Lane, Southwark ; *as*
it now stands this first of Janu-
ary, 1742.

“ T H E foundation of this school was
“ in the year 1687, in the reign of
“ king *James* the second : when a school
“ was set up by one *Poulton* a *Jesuit* ; and
“ publick notice was given, that he would
“ instruct the children of the poor *gratis* :
“ upon which Mr. *Arthur Shallet*, and some
“ other worthy persons, whose names de-
“ serve to be for ever remember’d with ho-
“ nour, set up *this* school ; to prevent the
“ dangerous consequences of a *Popish* school,
“ and to provide for the instruction of poor
“ children in the *Protestant* way.

“ T H E number of scholars at *first* was
“ *forty* ; afterwards it increased to *fifty* ;
“ and *now* ’tis *one hundred and thirty* :
“ who are taught to read, write, and cy-
“ pher ; and are instructed in the *Assembly’s*-
“ *catechism* ; that they may be qualified for
“ the service both of G O D and *man*.

“ I T

“ IT may be said to be the *first* school
 “ the *Protestant Dissenters* were concerned
 “ in: here objects are received without di-
 “ stinction of parties, the general good be-
 “ ing intended. It is situated in *one* of the
 “ poorest parts about the city; and the chil-
 “ dren of the poorest sort of watermen,
 “ fishermen, and others, are taught, with-
 “ out any expence to their parents; and
 “ are furnished with bibles, testaments,
 “ catechisms, writing and cyphering books.

“ THE charges have been defray’d by
 “ the gifts, and subscriptions of private per-
 “ sons, with *one annual* collection in this
 “ place on *new-years-day*, and *another* in the
 “ city; together with the kind remem-
 “ brance of some in their last wills.”

THIS account has been transmitted to
 me by the worthy treasurer of the school,
 and is thus publicly mention’d, in order to
 inform well-disposed christians, that any
 charitable donations will be thankfully receiv-
 ed, and carefully apply’d, to answer the *great*
 and *good purposes*, for which *alone* such
 schools should be erected; namely, to lead
 young persons, in *early* life, into an acquaint-
 ance with GOD and religion, and into such
 a knowledge of human things, as may, thro’
 the

50 *Early religion recommended.*

the divine blessing, help to make them good christians ; and, according to their low stations of life, useful members of the community, in their *growing* years. I have been informed, that this has actually been the happy case in several instances in this very school. It is well worth while to contribute to so *useful* a design ; and whatever is given, with a right disposition of spirit, will, no doubt, be a *well-pleasing sacrifice* to God ; nor will he fail to manifest his approbation and acceptance of it : *probably* in a large increase of *temporal* blessings *now* ; however, *most certainly*, with the glories of *paradise*, and the inestimable blessings of *eternity*.

THE liberal and generous contributions of good christians on such occasions, make it unnecessary to urge many arguments. It would be a sort of affront to press you to a thing, for which you have always shown yourselves *ready of your own accord*. I will therefore only subjoin *three* or *four* passages of sacred scripture, full of comfort to every christian, who is *rich in good works*, &c.

IT is more blessed to give, than to receive, was Christ's motto^f.

HE

^f Acts xx. 35.

Early religion recommended. 51

HE that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the LORD; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again^t.

BLESSED is he that considereth the poor, &c.^u.

—INASMUCH as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world^w.

MAY this sentence be pronounced by the great Judge upon every one of us, at the final day of recompence! *Amen.*]

^t Prov. xix. 17.
xxv. 34; 40.

^u Ps. xli. 1. & seq.

^w Mat.

The H Y M N.

[Sung *after sermon* ; borrow'd *from the*
excellent Dr. WATTS.]

I.

NOW in the heat of *youthful* blood
Remember your creator GOD:
Behold, the months come hast'ning on ;
When you shall say, "*my joys are gone.*"

II.

Behold, the aged sinner goes,
Laden with guilt and heavy woes,
Down to the regions of the dead,
With endless curses on his head.

III.

The *dust returns to dust* again ;
The *soul*, in agonies of pain,
Ascends to GOD, not there to dwell,
But hears her doom, and sinks to hell.

IV.

Eternal King ! I fear thy name ;
Teach me to know, *how frail I am* :
And when my *soul* must hence remove,
Give *me* a mansion in thy love !

F I N I S.



N.

the

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c,